

Devils Lake Journal Article
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I had no idea what I was getting into. Well I did, but it was way off the mark.

Let me back up a little bit. Like most of you, I am always looking for opportunities to better myself in one way or another and that is exactly how I ended up here, as the new marketing specialist at the North Dakota School for the Deaf. I have held the position for a little over a month, and what a month it has been.

Like I said, I had no idea. I knew that the school was on the north end of town and that many deaf and hard of hearing students came here to get their education, but that was about all I gave them credit for. Boy was I wrong.

This is the short list of what happens here:

- 22 students attend classes at NDSD
- 11 of them live here from Sunday evening thru Friday afternoon
- NDSD houses a captioning center for the entire state
- NDSD has 5 outreach staff members that work to help the deaf and hard of hearing state wide with offices in Devils Lake, Grand Forks, Fargo, Minot, and Bismarck
- Interpreters are provided state-wide by NDSD
- NDSD teaches several sign language classes in conjunction with the Devils Lake Public Schools and the Lake Region State College as well as provides classes state wide
- The NDSD campus is home to over 100 Head Start and Early Explorer children
- NDSD makes space available to the Tiny Tykes program for over 75 young children
- NDSD has its own physical plant that houses a boiler system which produces the heat for all of the buildings on campus
- NDSD houses a swimming pool that is used by 10 different agencies including Lake Region Search and Rescue, JROTC, and the National Guard

There are too many other interesting facts to list here. The bottom line is that I was overwhelmed by the happenings here at NDSD.

From now on, once a month, I am going to do my best to keep the folks of the Lake Region up to speed on what we do on our campus and off. I am sure I will miss a few things along the way, but hopefully it will give you a better understanding of the importance of NDSD.

November was a busy month, as they all are. The presidential election was as big here as it was anywhere. Many of our students attended the Rally 2008 at the Leeds High School. Here they learned about the process of electing a president and got to take part in their own presidential rally.

The high school students worked on a project evaluating a few local businesses as well as the NDSD campus for wheel chair accessibility. The students actually spent time navigating the businesses and our campus in wheel chairs. It was a very eye opening experience for all of them. They felt as if everyone was watching them and that the public viewed them differently because they were in wheel chairs. The students did feel that all the facilities they visited were very accessible to wheel chairs.

Many of our students will be visiting Deaf World on the 24th of November. It is a fun event that allows our students to get together with other deaf and hard of hearing people at UND. The event is spearheaded by Gary Sagstuen who teaches American Sign Language there. He has two children that graduated from NDSD.

The Deaf Duckling was performed at Lake Region State College. Nearly 800 students attended the play which focused on the difficulties of a child growing up deaf in a hearing family. The lessons learned that deaf children are not less intelligent because they do not hear well and the fact that other senses are heightened in deaf people making them better at other things will be carried forever by the students that saw the play.

Our students also participated in a food drive of sorts. As we all prepare for Thanksgiving, the students brainstormed about what they are thankful for. Afterwards, they decided they would like to give something back to the community. Can goods, household items, and toiletries were collected and will be donated to a local church group in time to be given to a needy family for the holiday.

The third and fourth grade class had a visitor last week. A sophomore from Mayville preparing for a career in special education sat in on a day of classes. The students read the story "The Cake" and then baked a cake with the college student. It has not yet been determined if the making or the eating was more fun.

The staff has been busy at NDSD as well. Carol Lybeck, Wendy Palmer, Diane Rice and Pam Smith attended a training seminar in Minot to "Discover the Magic of Teamwork." This clinic focused on helping special students transition to higher education, employment, and individual living.

Mavis Strand took time from her busy schedule as our special needs instructor to attend a “Love and Logic” seminar in Mandan.

Kerry Olson-Rysavy, NDSD technology coordinator, recently attended a training session on the State of North Dakota's emergency notification system - Notifind. Notifind is a notification tool that has the ability to contact large numbers of people using a single activation. It uses multiple contact methods such as phone, email, and text messaging to contact people. The system can be used to inform people of the emergency and to solicit feedback. As a state agency, NDSD will have access to this system and can utilize this tool as a means to quickly notify their staff of any emergency. Staff may also receive notification from state level personnel that may affect the school.

We here at NDSD would like to wish everyone a happy Thanksgiving. If you ever wonder what happens up north on our campus, by all means, stop in and say “Hi”. We would be more than glad to show you around so you too can get a better understanding of what happens at NDSD.